

FRANK READE

WEEKLY MAGAZINE,

Containing Stories of Adventures on Land, Sea & in the Air.

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Price 5 Cents.

AROUND THE HORIZON — FOR — TEN THOUSAND MILES;

OR, FRANK READE, JR.'S
MOST WONDEFUL TRIP.

By "NONAME."



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Around the Horizon for Ten Thousand Miles ;

OR,

FRANK READE, JR.'S MOST WONDERFUL TRIP.

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CHAPTER I.

THE NEW AIR-SHIP—THE PROJECTED TRIP.

"What trip do you propose to take now with your new airship, Mr. Reade?"

The speaker was one of an army of reporters who had been for days besieging the machine works of Frank Reade, Jr., the distinguished young inventor at Readestown.

The news had leaked out that Frank had perfected a new wonder of the air, and these agents of the press were eager to get the first account of it.

The reply which the young inventor made to his questioner was a remarkable one, and astonished them all.

"I am going to take a trip around the horizon," he declared.

"Around the horizon?"

"Yes."

"That statement is explicit, and yet a trifle ambiguous. Do you mean the horizon as we view it from this spot?"

Frank Reade, Jr., laughed.

"Hardly," he said. "The scope would be too limited.

When I say around the horizon, I mean a circle drawn upon the face of the earth."

"Would not that be a circle of the earth, or, really, around the world?"

"By no means. Let me illustrate. Supposing I start from New York, sail over the great lakes across the Northwest region, thence south to New Mexico, and home to the Blue Ridge Mountains and New York again. That would be almost entirely around the horizon of this country, would it not?"

"Around the horizon!" cried the reporters, embracing the idea. "Hurrah! That is a capital idea!"

And so the proposed trip of Frank Reade, Jr., around the horizon with his new airship, the Arrow, spread over the whole country. It created a great sensation.

Everywhere people scanned the sky at all hours of the day looking for the wonderful airship.

Frank Reade, Jr., had made all preparations for his projected trip.

The companions of the voyage were only two in number, his faithful servants, Barney O'Shea and Pomp.

Barney was a Celt, with a shock of red hair and an excellent disposition.

Pomp was a darky, black as coal, but true as steel.

Both were very much devoted to their young master. And Frank Reade, Jr., trusted them implicitly.

A brief description of the airship before going further in our story, will not be amiss.

The hull of the ship was very light, and made of thin plates of aluminum, with a bullet-proof coating of steel.

The shape was cylindrical, tapering to a point at both ends. Extreme lightness coupled with stability had been Frank's great object.

Amidships was an open compartment, where were the small cabin and living quarters of the voyagers.

These were compact and yet comfortable, being supplied with all the necessary articles for the cooking of food or the making of a camp on the ground if desired.

In the after part of the hull was the electrical machinery, by which the single huge rotascope and the wing-like revolving propellers at the sides were operated.

These were most powerful, and the Arrow could sail swift as an eagle in full flight.

A rudder at the rear end of the airship furnished steering power. Altogether the Arrow was a scientific wonder.

This is a meager description of the airship as it lay upon the stocks in the machine shop yard all ready for flight.

Of course there were placed aboard many necessary stores of food, arms and ammunition.

All was as shipshape and cozy as could be imagined.

Barney and Pomp were in high spirits over the prospect of the trip.

They were the warmest of friends, and yet always wrangling in a semi-humorous vein. Each was addicted to the playing of jokes upon the other.

And Barney, in the exuberance of the occasion, had planned a joke, which he believed would pay Pomp off for many old scores.

It was the very stale and ancient trick of putting a small quantity of powder in the darky's pipe. The powder exploded and blew the pipe into fragments, besides giving Pomp a fright.

Barney was hiding behind one of the big doors of the shop, and when the pipe blew up, he unwittingly betrayed his presence by snickering quite audibly.

At once Pomp comprehended that he had been made the victim of a joke.

"Golly sakes! Jes' wait till I gits mah hands on yo', Fish!" he yelled, making a break for Barney.

Convulsed with laughter, the Celt started to flee.

But the darky overtook him, and lowering his head like a battering ram, struck Barney full in the side.

The Celt went down as if struck by a cannon-ball.

"Ach, murther! It's kilt I am!" he yelled. "Let up weds yez, yez black devil!"

"I teach yo' fo' to fool wif dis chile!" cried Pomp, laboring Barney unmercifully.

Then they clinched, and for a time had a rough-and-tumble fight, until Frank Reade, Jr., appeared upon the scene and stopped them.

All preparations were finally concluded and the airship took flight on its wonderful trip around the horizon.

Over the country the Arrow flew to the northward, until one day the waters of Lake Erie burst into view. The "Frank changed the course more to the westward.

It was a wonderful panorama which the voyagers saw so far below.

Lakes and rivers and mountains sped from beneath them. Cities and towns and houses were scattered everywhere.

Upon the waters of Lake Erie were vessels, though some parts of the lake were frozen, it being the month of December, and a cold spell had set in.

But the aerial voyagers had warm clothing and did not mind the cold.

Frank had chosen this time of the year for the trip for the fact that when the airship should reach New Mexico and the south the climate would be more equable.

Bearing a little further north the airship finally reached the snow-clad regions of Manitoba.

In the light of the rising sun one morning they passed over the snowy landscape, showing farm-houses below, for this section of Manitoba was well settled.

Thus far no adventure worthy of note had occurred.

Only twice had a descent been made, and this was simply to procure good water.

But after leaving Manitoba they entered well into the wilds of the far Northwest.

It would be strange indeed if they should not here meet with some thrilling adventure.

One day the airship was sailing over a mighty gorge, when suddenly Barney cried:

"Luk down there, Misther Frank. Shure it's a man in distress."

Instantly Frank and Pomp looked down.

They saw the cause of Barney's remark at once. All were thrilled with the horrifying spectacle.

Clinging to a projecting spur of stone upon the face of a mighty canyon wall was a man.

Below him fully two hundred feet was the jagged bottom of the gorge.

If he would lose his hold he would be certainly precipitated to a most horrible death.

And that he would certainly be unable to much longer maintain his position there was certain.

He was a white man, and judging from his dress a mountain trapper, this region being the home of many such.

His white, agonized face was upturned, and even at that distance his call for help was heard.

"Mercy on us!" cried Frank Reade, Jr.; "he must be helped, and at once. I hope he will be able to hold on until we can reach him."

"Shure, sor, there's no time to lose!" cried Barney.

"Lower the ship!" cried Frank.

Barney, who was at the electric key-board, reversed the rotascope lever. The Arrow shot downward.

The unfortunate trapper plainly saw the airship descending to his succor. An expression of amazement at the unusual spectacle was upon his face.

But he saw that rescue was at hand, and ceased his cries for help.

Down settled the airship.

It could be seen now that the trapper clung to a projecting spur of rock from which the least shock would dislodge him.

Frank saw that great care must be employed in rescuing him.

On account of the spread of the rotascope, the Arrow could not get very near to the canyon wall.

But Frank now shouted:

"Hang on, friend; we'll get you out of there all right!"

"I'm all right, stranger," cried the trapper, pluckily.

"I can hang on here quite a while yet."

Frank procured a light rope and made a noose in it. This he threw toward the suspended man.

It struck the edge of the rock and the trapper caught it. The next moment he was swinging in space.

Frank made no attempt to draw him aboard.

"Lower the ship, Barney!" he cried.

The Celt obeyed.

Down sank the Arrow. A moment later the feet of the swinging man touched the bottom of the gorge. He was saved.

The Arrow sank to the floor of the gorge and there rested. Frank leaped out and stood face to face with the man whose life he had saved.

"I am Frank Reade, Jr., and this is my airship!" he cried. "Who are you?"

"Waal, I'm glad to meet ye, stranger," cried the rescued man. "Ye've saved my life and I'll never forget it. I'm Bill Sharpe, or Panther Bill, as they call me, an' I'm a trapper an' Injun fighter. Hyar's my paw, an' it's an honest one."

CHAPTER II.

THE SIGNAL FIRES.

Frank gazed into the speaker's face, and at once realized that he spoke the truth.

Panther Bill certainly was a type of the honest, large-hearted mountain hunter and trapper.

"I am glad to meet you, Panther Bill," said Frank, warmly. "Also to have happened along at such a favorable moment."

"Waal, there warn't no time to lose, I reckon," declared the hunter; "if you had delayed a leetle there'd been no need of coming down at all."

"How did you happen to get into that scrape?" asked Frank.

"Wall, it wuz jest this way: I wuz trying tew git a shot at a mountain goat on ther tother side of the gorge when I got tew near the edge. Afore I knew it I wuz over. I slid down, an' by luck caught onter that spur of rock."

"Whew! It was a close call!"

"Waal, it cudn't hev bin much closer."

"You are right. But you spoke of Indians. Are there many in this vicinity?"

"More than a milyun of 'em, stranger, an' they're a pizen lot. I hev lots of trouble with 'em, fer they rob my traps. Only yesterday they raised ther dickens at a settlement down ther river about a dozen miles. They burned six cabins an' carried inter captivity pretty Mamie Starr, ther darter of Jeb Starr, as white a man as ever wore a mocasin. That's what I'm up hyar arter. I'm trailin' Black Elk's gang ter see ef I can't resky ther gal."

Frank was instantly interested.

"You don't mean it?" he exclaimed, earnestly. "Is the young girl yet in the power of the savages?"

"Yas."

"Then it is the duty of every honorable man to go to her rescue."

"Kerect, stranger. Yu're a man of my kind."

"If you will give me a few hints as to where she is likely

to be found, my airship shall be employed to rescue her."

The trapper was delighted.

"Good fer ye!" he cried. "I hev been lookin' at that curus contrivance. How on earth do yew make it go?"

"If you will come aboard I will show you," replied Frank.

And with this the young inventor proceeded to show the mechanism of the Arrow to the borderman, who was intensely interested.

After he had finished this inspection of the aerial wonder and been introduced to Barney and Pomp, Frank decided to take action.

"You can accompany us on board the Arrow," he said, "and we will proceed directly to the spot where you think the young girl is held a prisoner."

"In course," cried the trapper. "I'm a thousand times obleeged."

"Were you the only man who set out for her rescue?"

"Oh, no; thar's Jeb an' a dozen more lively rangers scourin' this region. We mought run acrost them."

"Well, whether we do or not," cried Frank, "we will make an effort to rescue the girl without their aid."

"Why, in course we kin," cried Panther Bill, enthusiastically; "in this 'ere invention we kin jest sail up over ther Injun camp an' shoot ther hull gang on 'em. It'll be as easy as rollin' off a log."

"I hope so," said Frank. "Send her up, Barney."

"All right, sor."

Up went the airship, and the search for Black Elk's village began.

"Kain't say that I know jest whar ther pizen sarpints hold out," said Panther Bill; "but I think if we steer over yender mounting we'll be pooty sure to come onto 'em."

"We'll go just as you say," said Frank.

So Panther Bill sat down beside Barney and directed the flight of the airship.

It was a novel experience for the trapper, and he manifested great delight and wonderment.

"Upon my soul!" he exclaimed, "I shed think I was dreamin' if I didn't know I wuz awake."

The Arrow sailed on over the mountain side, and soon had crossed the divide or watershed.

And here the scenery underwent a remarkable change.

In place of the deep woods and sluggish streams, there was a region much akin to the Mauvais Terres, or Bad Lands of Dakota.

Buttes and cone-shaped hills of marl and sandstone were everywhere intersected by ravines and canyons.

There was a scarcity of vegetation, and the streams running to the westward were wild and brawling.

The voyagers looked upon the transition with amazement.

"Well, I declare!" exclaimed Frank, in surprise; "h is contrast for you. Surely this is a change!"

"An' yew kin bet thar's a big difference," declared the trapper. "A white man may be safe on this side of the mounting, but when he gits over thar yew kin bet it's different."

"Then it is the stronghold of the redskins?"

"Yew bet."

Frank said no more, and the airship moved on in silence while all kept a close watch of the region below.

Suddenly Barney gave a sharp cry.

"Begorra, phwat's that?" he cried. "Did yez see that? It was a curious manifestation, but all had seen it."

From one of the mountain tops a bright sheet of flame had leaped into the air.

A long column of smoke followed it, and continued to hang in the sky.

"It's a signal fire," cried the trapper; "they're right on us, yew kin bet."

"I don't see how they can be otherwise," laughed Frank; "they certainly ought to be able to see us."

"Ye're right," agreed Panther Bill. "We ain't hidin'."

"What do they employ to make that bright flame?"

"It's pitchwood and b'ar's ile. Jest light ther ile; it'll flash up like gunpowder. Then ther pitchwood makes ther smoke."

"Begorra, there goes another!" cried Barney.

This was true.

From the summit of an adjoining mountain another signal light went up. The Blackfoot savages were planning to meet the invaders.

In spite of the elevation those on board the airship could see literally nothing of the savages.

The fire and smoke seemed to come from crevices in the rock.

If there was a hiding place there for the savages it was not visible at that distance.

Frank decided to investigate one of these signal fires.

So he held the airship down toward one of the mountain peaks.

As the airship drew near to it, the trapper seemed so what alarmed and cried:

"Is this ar boat bullet proof?"

"Yes," replied Frank.

"That's all right, then. But look out none of ye git head over the rail, or yer might git hit, see?"

"Exactly," declared Frank. "We'll look out for that."

The trapper's warning was quickly proved a timely one. Suddenly the report of rifles was heard below.

Then the click of the bullets was plainly audible as they struck the shell of the airship and went singing away into space.

No harm was done by the Indian volley, but the warning given by Panther Bill was one plainly not to be disregarded.

"They mean business, don't they?" cried Frank. "Well, we'll give them a hint that we do, too."

The young inventor leaned forward in the bow and removed two or three little screw-caps, which revealed round portholes in the bottom of the airship.

Then he thrust the barrel of his rifle down through one of these.

Panther Bill caught the idea and did the same. Barney and Pomp kept the Arrow steady.

The Indians could be seen far below trying to screen themselves under overhanging rocks.

They were firing at the airship as rapidly as possible, trying to bring down what seemed to them some fiendish contrivance of the white man's, which had come, like the railroad, to drive them from their hunting grounds.

Their angry yells came up plainly to the hearing of those on board the Arrow.

"I've got a good line on one of those fellows!" cried Frank. "Here goes."

Crack!

A wild yell of agony came up from below. One of the savages had passed in his final account.

Crack!

The trapper's rifle spoke. Another savage sang his death song. A quick and accurate fire was maintained.

There was not a little risk in firing through the portholes in this way.

Several times both Frank and the trapper narrowly escaped injury. Panther Bill got a bullet fair in the stock of his rifle, which split it.

A bullet struck the muzzle of Frank's, and split along the barrel. But it gave the young inventor only a slight shock.

It soon became evident that the savages were getting tired of this sort of fighting.

Their position was by far too exposed for them to maintain it long. They suddenly ceased firing.

In a moment, as if by magic, they had vanished completely.

Not a sign of them was visible. Where had they gone suddenly?

Frank exchanged glances with Bill.

"Is that a stratagem?" he asked, "or have they really given up the fight?"

"They've quit," said the trapper, confidently; "but jest ther same we don't want ter do anythin' foolish."

"Where have they gone?" asked Frank.

"Why, inter the mounting."

"Into the mountain?"

"Sartinly! Every one of these hills hyarabouts is cut up inter caves an' holes an' blin' canyons. That's whar they've gone, yew bet!"

"Well," exclaimed Frank, dubiously, "that's bad for us."

"Hoaw so?"

"We never can pursue them with the airship."

Panther Bill laughed.

"We kin do better," he cried. "We kin batten 'em in thar an' starve 'em like foxes in a hole."

But Frank could not embrace the idea with the same enthusiasm of the trapper.

For one reason the young inventor did not want to linger so long in the vicinity. He must continue his journey.

So he said:

"If possible we had better settle the matter with them quickly. Where do you think they have the young girl confined? In one of these caves?"

"I reckon so," replied the trapper.

"How are we to drive them out? It is too slow a method to resort to starvation."

"I kain't say jest naow, unless one ov us takes a scout down yender on his own hook."

"That is risky, is it not?"

"Waal, yes, jest a bit."

"We will try another method," said Frank, with sudden inspiration. "To-day we will sail all over this region and give them a good scare. To-night we will try a bit of strategy."

"That is ther way to talk it," declared the trapper. "If ye are goin' tew try any tricky game, arter dark is ther time tew do it."

There seemed little to be gained in dallying about this vicinity any longer, so Frank said to Barney:

"Sail over to the further mountain. Let's see what we can find there."

CHAPTER III.

THE RESCUE.

The Celt promptly obeyed the order given him, and the airship sailed away across the deep chasms and rough ground.

Soon it was gliding up the slopes of the opposite mountain.

The signal fire here was discovered. A pile of pitch-wood was burning in a crevice of the cliff.

But not one of the Indians was to be seen. They had sought safety in their hiding places.

What was to be done?

Frank was in somewhat of a quandary, when a distant sound came to the hearing of all.

It was the report of rifles and the remote sounds of a conflict.

Panther Bill was excited.

"Tearin' catamounts!" he screamed; "thet's Jeb Starr an' his men, an' they've got intew a scrimmage!"

"Do you believe it?" asked Frank, eagerly.

"I know it."

"Where do you think they are?"

"Over yonder in Bear Canyon. I reckon old Black Elk is standin' 'em off."

"It's for you to say," cried Frank. "Shall we go over there?"

"If ye will."

Barney turned the airship in the direction of the distant sounds of conflict. They were swelling in volume every moment.

It was evident that no light battle was in progress.

As the airship drew momentarily nearer, the smoke from the burning powder was seen emerging above the wall of a deep gorge in the distance.

Nearer the airship drew every moment to the scene. Suddenly it burst into view.

Panther Bill was right.

The rescuing party, under the command of Jeb Starr, were engaged in a hot fight with the redskins.

The air was full of flying bullets, though both parties were ensconced behind suitable defenses of stone.

But as the airship appeared above them the conflict seemed to cease.

It was evident that both parties were astonished at its appearance, and perhaps mystified to make out its true character.

The white trappers were no doubt fully as much amazed as the Indians. At any rate it caused a lull in the conflict.

Scores of the savages could be seen in the defile hiding behind rocks and other obstructions. They were at first evidently terrified at sight of the airship.

But one tall chief, with black plumes, seemed to reassure

them with savage exhortations, so that they stood the ground and did not fly.

As the airship, like a huge bird sailed over their heads, loud yells of defiance went up.

Panther Bill wanted to open fire, but Frank cried:

"Not yet. We have plenty of time for that."

Then the young inventor allowed the airship to fly over the spot where the white scouts were.

They sent up a cheer as the airship began to settle down upon them.

When about fifty yards from the earth, Frank leaned over the rail, and shouted:

"Hello, down there!"

"Hello yerself!" came back the reply.

"How air ye, pards!" shouted Panther Bill, leaning out in full view. "I'm durned glad tew see ye!"

"Panther Bill! What air yew doing up thar?" came back the cry.

"Don't ax sich a foolish question," retorted the trapper. "Don't ye see what I'm doin'."

"Hello, Bill!" shouted one of the scouts. "You know me?"

"Jeb Starr!"

"Yas."

"Yew bet I do!"

"What kind of a queer rigging hev yew got thar? Is it a kite?"

"Well, hardly. It's an airship."

"An airship?"

"Yas, and Mister Frank Reade, Jr., ther owner of it is going ter help us tew rescue your gal Mamie!"

Cheers went up at this.

"Give Mister Reade my best grip!" shouted the delighted parent. "Tell him he'll never be sorry for it, if he eums tew Coon Bend!"

"I hev told him!" replied Bill. "Oh, he's a gentlem an' this ar airship is a big help!"

"Easy there, Bill!" laughed Frank. "Don't go it steep!"

"Ain't goin' tew, Mister Reade. It's no more nor ye deserve. Wall, what's tew be done now?"

But there was little need for asking this question. The Indians had opened fire again hotly.

The bullets were flying all about the airship, and Frank at once terminated the interview.

"I'm glad to meet you, Mr. Starr!" he shouted. "I'm going to help you all I can. I think we can drive the redskins this time!"

Then up shot the Arrow.

The airship rose to a height of three hundred feet. Then the loopholes in the bottom were opened, and fire was opened on the Indians.

For a time it was of the most destructive kind.

The savages were completely exposed. They could dodge the bullets from the white trappers, but they could not evade those from above.

For a time they stood their ground valiantly. But it is soon evident that they were weakening.

To see their comrades shot down about them in literal heaps was not only demoralizing, but terrifying. Veteran warriors could hardly have stood this.

Moreover, their fire being now divided between the foe in front and the one above, they were more easily driven back by the white scouts.

In short, the position of the savages became very quickly a hot one.

And now Frank proceeded to put into effect a scheme whereby he hoped to entrap the whole gang.

From the little cabin of the airship he drew forth a large coil of wire.

Putting on some insulated gloves he carefully rigged this wire so that it dropped to the earth below and made a line across the upper end of the canyon.

It was by this avenue that the Indians must make their escape.

Then Frank connected the other end of the wire with the dynamo sending the full force of the deadly current over the wire.

The Arrow was held stationary just over this part of the canyon.

The crisis rapidly approached.

The deadly wire lying across the canyon was "alive," and woe to the luckless savage who should come in contact with it.

Flushed with victory, the white scouts were pressing tightly upon the savages, driving them up the canyon.

The redskins finally broke in confusion and flew precipitately.

The first Indian to touch the live wire received such a shock as he had never experienced before.

He was literally hurled back and senseless against the opposite wall of the canyon.

One after another of the Indians received the same treatment.

In less time than it takes to tell it, a heap of dead and senseless savages lay in the canyon.

Appalled by such a horrible fate, the remainder of the gang paused.

They in terror threw away their rifles and held their hands up.

They were willing to surrender.

The mad joy of the white trappers can hardly be expressed in words. They came pell-mell down upon their red foes.

Each one of the half hundred captured savages was tightly bound. The victory was complete.

Among the number of the captured was Black Elk. The big chief was much crestfallen.

He had lost over fifty of his best warriors, and was a captive himself.

It was not a wonder that he was ready to agree to any terms.

Frank discharged the current from the live wire, and then allowed the airship to descend.

In the canyon it rested upon the ground, and then the voyagers were enabled to meet face to face the white trappers.

It was a warm greeting which Frank and Barney and Pomp received.

In a little while all were the warmest of friends. Panther Bill fairly embraced Frank.

"You've done a big thing for this part of the country!" he cried. "We'll never forget ye!"

"I am glad to have been able to help you," declared Frank.

The question now arose as to what method to pursue to recover Mamie Starr from her savage captors. Frank was called upon for a plan.

"I should try and make terms with the captured chief," he said. "Promise him his liberty if he will give up the girl."

"Kerect!" cried Panther Bill, "that's jest the plan." So Black Elk was interviewed.

He readily agreed to the terms. One of the warriors was set free and with instructions from Black Elk left the camp.

An hour elapsed, then two forms were seen coming down the canyon.

"Mamie, my child!" cried Starr, wildly, as he rushed forward and embraced the liberated girl.

The messenger sent by the chief had brought the fair captive safely back with him.

True to their word, the white scouts now gave Black Elk and his followers their freedom. They were evidently glad to get it.

CHAPTER IV.

IN THE NORTHERN ROCKIES.

Mamie Starr was a pretty and modest young lady. When she learned how her rescue had been brought about, she shyly thanked Frank for his kindness.

"Do not give me all the credit," said the young inventor. "Much belongs to the others."

It was a happy party in the canyon that afternoon.

But the day was drawing to a close, and Frank felt that now that the affair was over, it would be best to resume the journey.

"Mister Reade, I speak in behalf of ther good people of Coon Bend," cried Jeb Starr, bluffly, "an' we all want yer sojourn with us fer awhile. Ye kin own ther place."

"I thank you all heartily," replied Frank; "but I find that it will be necessary for us to resume our journey. I will go with you out of this canyon and to a point of safety, then I shall have to say adieu."

"By gosh, I wish I was traveling with ye!" cried Panther Bill.

Frank was as good as his word.

The airship accompanied the party safely out of the canyon. Then amid cheers it sprang into the air.

Due westward Frank set the course. In a few moments their erstwhile acquaintances were lost to view.

Night was coming on rapidly.

The searchlight in the bow of the airship, however, made all ahead as plain as day for a long distance.

Over wild and desolate regions the airship now made its way.

Midnight came and Barney was at the wheel, Frank and Pomp having sought slumber.

A short while after midnight Barney was relieved by Pomp. The darky held the airship nearer to the earth.

Suddenly, in passing over a deep defile in the mountains, the darky heard an awful yell of agony from the depths.

"Golly!" he gasped, "Wha' ebber am dat?"

His kinky wool stood on end.

However, he had presence of mind enough to spring to the searchlight and turn its rays downward.

The scene which he beheld was a thrilling one.

Two forms he saw struggling in a copse. Now they reached out into the open, and the darky gasped with horror.

"Golly fo' glory! It am a man an' a wil' cat!"

This was partly the truth. A man was struggling in the embrace of a mighty specimen of a catamount.

Of course, such a struggle must necessarily be brief and one-sided. If the man was to be helped then it must come quickly.

Pomp brought the airship to a halt.

He did not wait to consider any possible consequences or to ask advice.

He simply knew that a human being was in distress, and this was enough. His rifle was by his side.

Quick as a flash he picked it up and fired.

There was not time for much of an aim. But fortune favored the darky. The bullet went true to the mark.

The catamount gave a most human-like wail, vaulted high in the air, and rolled down the steep descent, carrying its would-be victim with it.

Pomp let the airship sink. Frank and Barney sprang up.

"What's the matter?" cried the young inventor. "Why has happened?"

"Golly, Marse Frank, I done fired at a big cattymount which I see fightin' wif a man down dere. I done fink I killed de critter."

"Did you?" cried Frank. "Where is the man?"

"I'se jes' gwine down fo' to see, sah."

"Begorra, I thought the sky had fallen on me," muttered the Celt, as he sat up and rubbed his eyes. "I niver was so sound ashlope afore in me loife."

Down sank the airship.

Frank threw the rays of the searchlight down the mountain, and there he saw the dead form of the catamount.

There also was the man, who was regaining his feet with painful effort. It was evident that he was badly wounded.

"Hello, down there!" cried Frank. "Who are you?"

"I'm Bill Jenks, trapper," was the reply. "Who's tarnation ar' yew?"

"I am Frank Reade, Jr., and this is my airship," replied Frank.

"Yew don't say! Waal, by bufflers, yew saved my life."

"I am glad of that. How did you get into that scrape?"

"Why, ther critter jumped onto me all of a sudden. I was jest goin' down tew camp, tew miles below hyar. Bless my stars! Air yew floatin' in ther air, or hev I got t' jim-jams?"

"I told you that this is my airship," replied Frank.

"Airship?"

"Yes."

"Waal, I'm dunfusticated! So they hev got airships, hev they? I've seen ther railroads, an' heern tell about t' bicycles, but I never heern of an airship!"

"Well, it has come to pass," replied Frank.

"I swar tew man, thet's powerful curus."

"Well, Mr. Jenks, what more can we do for you?"

"Not a darned thing," replied the trapper. "I'm all right."

"Aren't you much hurt?"

"Clawed up some, but they're all flesh wounds, an' I reckon they'll heal. No, I'll jest go 'long down tew camp, an' I'll thank ye fer savin' my life. P'r'aps I kin do the return some time."

"If you are not able to travel I can manage to take you down to your camp," said Frank.

"No, yew won't! I won't put yew tew so much trouble. Good-night to ye!"

"Good-night, then!"

Frank pressed the lever and the airship shot up into the sky.

"That was a plucky gosssoon, begorra!" cried Barney. "Shure I'll lay me hat he was badly hurt."

"No doubt of it," agreed Frank. "However, we could do no more."

Once more Barney and Frank returned to sleep. Nothing more occurred to disturb them that night.

Morning came clear and bright, and they were now over a mighty level plain, which extended as far as the eye could reach.

Frank knew that they were in a wild part of British Columbia. The air was keen and frosty, for winter was beginning to set in here.

Troops of buffalo were browsing upon the tufts of grass which rose above the snow.

"They snorted and fled wildly as the airship sailed above them."

It required all of that day to pass over the great plain. The mountains showed mighty and high-crowned in the distance.

"Those are the mighty Rockies," declared Frank; "there we change our course to the southward."

It was Frank's intention to follow this gigantic range to the west, and then steer for the Gulf Coast and due east.

When the Rocky Mountains were encountered that evening at 105 degrees west, longitude 4 degrees north latitude.

This was just over the line in British America. Frank then set the course due south.

But as the airship had now been many days afloat, and the machinery really needed a rest, Frank decided to descend and camp for the night.

A suitable spot was found upon a spur of the mountain, where the Arrow was allowed to rest.

In a jiffy Pomp had leaped out and collected fuel for a

The Arrow was securely anchored and everything made ready for a night's secure stay on the spot.

The view from this spur of the Rockies was something grand beyond all description.

The stretch of country to the north and to the south was vast and varied.

There were distant mountain ranges upon ranges, plains, valleys, and lakes and rivers. All formed a mighty and glorious panorama.

The voyagers gazed upon it for a time with deepest interest.

"Golly!" cried Pomp, "it done seem as if we cud see de whole world from dis place."

"Begorra, yez niver said anything so sensible afore, naygur," declared Barney.

"It is grand!" was all Frank could say.

After the evening meal, which Pomp knew so well how to prepare, a little tour of exploration was made.

Frank led this around the mountain wall. He was a skilled geologist, and at once fell to examining the state of the rock.

"There ought to be minerals here," he declared. "Ah, I thought so!"

He paused before a vein of quartz which seemed to extend far up the mountain between sides of granite.

It required but a glance for Frank to see the gold signs cropping out, and he cried:

"Here is a great discovery! We have found a vein of gold."

"Gold, or!" cried Barney.

"Golly, you don't say?"

The two servitors tumbled over each other in their eagerness to reach the spot.

Frank indicated the vein.

"Bejabbers, I kin see some whoite stone, but moighty little gold," declared the Celt.

"Look sharper and you will see it," said Frank. "Of course it is not in the form of nuggets."

"Howiver wud yez git it thin?" asked the Celt.

"Oh, by means of a stamp mill," declared Frank. "The quartz is crushed and the gold taken out of it. This discovery is of little value to us, but some big mining company will no doubt some day cut this mountain all to pieces."

The gold vein was left, and new geological wonders were found.

There were great blocks of rubies, emeralds, garnets and crystals. These were encrusted in lime rock, and were valuable only as magnificent specimens.

But as the party were exploring the side of the mountain to the north, a little landslide was encountered.

And here in the bank were some mighty bones.

Some giant animal had been buried by the drift of time. Frank examined the bones carefully.

"Shure, phwat koind av a crather cud that have been?" asked Barney; "he must have been as big as a meetin' house!"

"It is the remains of a mastodon," said Frank; "they were a gigantic animal."

"An' shure, are any av them around now?" asked Barney.

"They are extinct," replied Frank.

"Shure, that's lucky fer us. Begorra, we niver cud git so high with the airship but that crather cud reach up and pull us down."

Frank and Pomp laughed heartily at this.

CHAPTER V.

FIGHT WITH THE GRIZZLIES.

Leaving the remains of the mastodon, the explorers now went a little higher up the mountain.

This brought them suddenly to a startling scene.

Suddenly before them yawned the mighty mouth of a cavern. It was deep into the heart of the mountain.

There was nothing specially strange in this fact, as the mountains were full of caves.

But there, right at the entrance to the cave, was the half-devoured body of a mountain goat.

There were also huge piles of the bones of other animals. A well-beaten path led into the cave.

Frank understood the meaning of this at once.

"Phwat the divil kind av a baste lives in there?" asked Barney.

"Fo' de lan's sake! he mus' hab had a good dinner," averred Pomp.

Frank shivered, and replied:

"We don't want to fool around here very long."

"Why, sor?" asked Barney.

"Because we will get into trouble. Do you know what that cave holds?"

"Divil a bit."

"It is the den of a grizzly bear. If he should get after us we would have heaps of trouble, I can tell you."

"Golly!" gasped Pomp, "don' want nuffin' to do wif bars. Let's get out ob dis."

"Begorra, so say I!" cried Barney.

So all beat a retreat down the mountain side.

But before they reached the airship, Barney cried:

"Shure, sor, will he iver cum down here an' tackle us?"
"I think not," replied Frank. "I believe they rare tackle any one who keeps out of their way. He will har come down here."

"Shure, if he was loikely to it wud be safer to get o av this place."

"I think we need not fear," said Frank. "At least will take chances on Bruin."

They sat down around the camp fire, and engrossed conversation as the shades of night came on, forgot about the bear and his cave.

Barney and Pomp were nothing if not jolly, so presens they brought a banjo and fiddle, and began to make mer

Barney was a fine fiddler, and could also sing many qua old Irish ballads.

Pomp on the other hand was a master of the banjo, w knew all the plantation melodies.

So they sang and played until they waxed sleepy. Th fresh wood was heaped on the fires, and they prepared retire.

Barney was to watch the first half of the night and Po the latter. Frank turned in at once.

Barney ensconced himself in the bow of the airship, w his rifle by his side.

The night was as black as a pocket. The Celt was f fully tired, and the heat of the fire near made him intens drowsy.

"Begorra, it's hard worruk to kape me eyes open," G grunted. "Phwat wud happen if I should fall ashlap's

He looked at the fire, and reckoned safely that no tra animal would venture near it.

Then he thought of Indians.

But thus far not one had been seen in the vicinity. a was hardly likely that trouble need be feared from the ut

The more he philosophized thus the sleepier he becom He was always true to a trust, and one of the best of b tinels.

Upon the present night, however, he fell asleep, wit intending to.

Before he knew it his eyelids had closed, and he be snoring blissfully. How long he slept he never knew

He was brought back to his senses in a curious way.

Suddenly he had a peculiar vision. A sort of drea nightmare was upon him.

It seemed as if some dreadful monster was about to

him in his horrid jaws. A hot, fetid breath fanned his face, and he awoke.

He awoke to a most horrible realization. As he opened his eyes, he saw that the nightmare was a reality.

A horrible giant form was over him. Reeking jaws threatened him. He gave a yell like a madman and sprang

But even in that moment an awful bellow went up on the air, and he was seized in giant arms.

Barney saw in that fearful moment, in the glare of the electric light, what seemed a legion of grizzly forms.

He remembered the cave in the mountain, and at once realized the truth. A whole army of grizzlies had descended to attack the airship.

The Celt could not free himself from the terrible grip upon him. He could not recover his rifle.

So he did the next best thing and pulled out his knife.

Fortunately his right arm was free, and just as the bear's jaws were sinking into his shoulder he sent the knife home to the creature's side.

With a hoarse bellow of pain the bear closed upon Barney and gave him an awful embrace.

Then it was that Frank and Pomp were aroused. They were awakened by Barney's awful yell.

It required but one horrified glance for Frank to take in the situation.

As many as a dozen of the much feared grizzlies were about the camp and surrounded the airship.

Some of them were literal giants. By a strange fate the voyagers had alighted in a veritable bears' den.

For an instant Frank was too paralyzed to act. Then he nerved himself to the effort.

"Golly—golly, Marse Frank!" screamed Pomp, wildly, "I'se jes' gwine to be all eated up fo' sho'!"

Frank saw that Barney was struggling with one of the grizzlies outside the airship.

Had Barney been safely aboard the danger might have been averted by sending the airship up.

But Frank would never do this and leave one of his companions to such an awful fate.

So he cried:

"Hang on, Barney! Don't give up! I'm coming to help you!"

Raising his rifle, Frank fired point-blank at a monster grizzly bearing down on him.

The brute fell, as the ball went fortunately to a vital spot.

But Pomp had now regained his senses. He had seen the danger of Barney's position.

There was a strong bond between the two faithful fellows. One was ever ready to defend the other, even at cost of life.

So Pomp did not hesitate.

He sprang over the rail and rushed to Barney's aid.

"Hang on dar, honey," he shouted. "I'se coming' to help yo'."

Barney was driving the knife home into his shaggy foe's body as fast as ever he could.

But the bear seemed to have the lives of the Kilkenny cats, and would not relax his terrible grip.

But just as his awful jaws were about to crush Barney's shoulder Pomp placed his rifle against the brute's side and fired.

A terrible hole was blown in the animal's side. Blood gushed forth in a literal column.

The struggle was over. The brute fell dead instantly.

But this was only the beginning of the trouble. Pomp had not time to turn when he was in the embrace of a bear.

The brute's claws tore a rent in his shoulder, and he yelled:

"Hi, hi! I'se done killed fo' sho'. Kill dat critter!"

He had not a chance to use his rifle, for the bear had him tight in his clutches.

But Barney grabbed the repeater from his hands, and cried:

"Hold on, naygur, an' I'll hilp ye. Bad cess to the devil."

Barney thrust the muzzle of the rifle into the bear's mouth and fired. The creature dropped instantly.

Frank Reade, Jr., had started in the first place to Barney's assistance. But before he could reach him a bear had him in his clutches.

Three of the grizzlies were disposed of. But the other seven were lively citizens to be sure.

Frank had not time to use his rifle. He drew his knife and used it.

Then he realized the bad break he had made in leaving the airship. The bears had piled over the rail and were literally taking possession of it.

Barney and Pomp now came to Frank's assistance. The bear with which he was struggling was killed.

But the voyagers were aghast at the position in which they were placed now.

The six bears had literal possession of the Arrow, and were turning things topsy-turvy.

To attack them seemed madness. The only rifle in the party was the one Barney had, and that was now smashed.

Their knives were the only weapons the voyagers had.

They knew it would be impossible for them to attack the bears with such slight weapons.

What was to be done?

"Begorra, we're in a fix now!" cried Barney. "Shure, an' phwativer shall we do, I'd loike to know?"

"I done fink dem bears hab got de bess ob it!" cried Pomp.

"I only pray they will not ruin the machinery!" groaned Frank.

"How the divil will we iver git rid av thim?" sputtered Barney.

This was certainly a problem of no mean dimensions. The bears meanwhile were having a picnic.

They were ransacking the airship with evident pleasure.

Frank remembered with a thrill of relief that the cabin door was closed and locked.

They could hardly do any harm there; that was a most important thing, too.

They could get at the machinery, but whether they could do this any harm or not was a question.

They might get a rude shock from the dynamos if nothing more.

As it was, however, nothing could be done just now to dispossess them.

There was nothing to do but to wait for daylight and to hope for some new plan then.

So the voyagers sought a position upon the mountain side above, and waited for the coming of day.

They could see the huge forms of bears reclining upon the deck of the airship. Thus far they had been content with simple possession.

"Perhaps they will go away of their own accord when daylight comes," said Frank, hopefully.

CHAPTER VI.

IN THE GREAT BASIN.

Frank's promise was not without foundation. When daylight came the grizzlies evidently thought their cavern a preferable place.

For they proceeded to clamber out of the airship and lumber away up the mountain side.

It was a moment of supreme joy for the dispossessed voyagers.

They hardly waited for the grizzlies to vanish, when they came tumbling down and aboard once more.

"Golly! amn't dis chile glad dey is gone!" cried Pomp.

"Begorra, I niver want anything more to do with grizzlies!" declared Barney.

"It is a lucky escape for us!" averred Frank; "it's a wonder they didn't rip the airship all to pieces."

This was indeed true.

They had nosed into some of the stores and spoiled them. But this was all the harm done.

Altogether it was a lucky escape.

The voyagers lost no time in putting things to rights. The skins of the four dead grizzlies were secured.

Then the anchors were pulled in, and the Arrow was once more sent aloft.

Up into the air she rose like a huge bird, and sped away to the southward.

Later in the day Frank announced that they had crossed the line and were in the United States.

Cheers were given, and the Union flag was run up to the breeze. The airship bore steadily southward.

The country now began to present a more broken appearance.

There were wooded slopes, green valleys below the skyline, and beautiful natural parks.

At times tribes of Indians were seen galloping in the chase of the buffalo or stalking the deer.

Sometimes a fort would be seen far below with troops on parade. Again, a solitary horseman would be crossing the prairie far below.

All manner of wild and savage beasts were seen. Eagles were frightened from their eyries, and in some cases even dared to attack the airship.

Thus the constantly moving panorama passed on.

"I don't intend to descend until we get well down in the Great Basin," declared Frank; "then I am going to make a geological and geographical inspection of the region. I am anxious to see those underground rivers of which I have heard so much."

"Golly, Marse Frank," cried Pomp, "don' yo' git car under de ground. We nebber fin' yo' dar!"

"Don't worry, Pomp," laughed Frank. "I intend to stay above ground for a few years yet."

Still to the southward the airship kept. One day the ship, passing into Nevada, floated over the region of the Great Basin.

Barney, who had been studying the desolate region, suddenly cried:

"Begorra, Misther Frank, phwat's all av that smoke?"

"Smoke?" asked Frank.

"Yis, sor. Wud yez luk yonder," averred the Celt.

Frank looked in the direction indicated.

From between high ridges of land there rose a dense cloud.

"That is not smoke, Barney," he cried.

"Shure, sor, then phwat is it?"

"It is vapor," declared Frank. "There is a hot lake or basin there, with possibly some geysers."

"Shure, that's very funny."

"Yes, so it is. We will go over there and look at it."

Frank turned the airship in that direction.

They approached the vapor cloud rapidly.

A long valley, perhaps a dozen miles in extent, was visible. Over it hung the peculiar cloud.

It was undoubtedly vapor, but what caused it? was the question.

The bed of the valley was free from any basin of boiling water.

But the sands were arid, and as the airship descended and rested upon them Frank found that they were hot to the touch.

What was a curious thing was that the floor of this desert valley seemed to be studded with bones of birds, animals, and even human beings.

"That is queer," cried Frank. "If I did not know that we were too far south I should think we were in Death Valley."

"Begorra, mebbe it's another Death Valley!" cried Barney. "Shure phwat's the matter with the naygur?"

Barney's horrified cry had attracted Frank's attention.

The darky had fallen to the deck in an apparent fit.

His muscles were drawn, his eyes were rolled up into his head, and he seemed to be dying.

In an instant Frank was by his side. But just as he was about to minister to the darky, Barney gave a gurgling cry, and fell by his side.

When the young inventor realized that something was wrong.

He also felt a deadly spasm seizing him. The sandy floor danced before his eyes, and deadly nausea seized him. Instantly Frank comprehended the truth.

My God!" he gasped, "the deadly gas is overcoming

and with that realization came the impulse to get out of the vicinity as quickly as possible.

He had just strength enough left to reach forward and grasp the rotascope lever.

When he lost consciousness.

When he came to fresh air was blowing in his face, and he revived very quickly.

The airship was far up in the sky, and drifting before a strong breeze. The keen, purifying air had overcome the deadly narcotic gases.

Frank leaped up and saw Barney and Pomp lying near. They were also showing signs of returning consciousness.

And now Frank realized how very narrow had been their escape. He was intensely thankful.

Had he not pressed the lever at that opportune moment, without doubt the airship would have remained in the valley forever.

For they would undoubtedly have become victims to the deadly gas.

But as it was Frank realized that they were saved by what seemed a literal miracle.

His first impulse upon recovering was to resuscitate Barney and Pomp.

Fanning and an application of hartshorn speedily brought this about. Soon they were able to arise.

"Golly!" gasped Pomp, "I done fink dis chile was clare done fo'."

"Bejabbers, phwat the divil kem over us all?" spluttered Barney.

"We have had a very narrow escape," declared Frank. "Certainly we must congratulate ourselves that it is no worse."

It was not long before all were again as lively as ever.

It was decided not to risk another visit to the Poisoned Valley, as it was called.

But Frank allowed the airship to descend again. He was not yet done with his explorations of the Great Basin.

There were many things which he wished to study, and so the Arrow was allowed to descend.

In a few moments she was hanging over a deep basin, in which were several saline lakes.

Here Frank selected a suitable spot, and allowed the airship to descend and rest upon the ground.

The anchors were thrown out and all was made fast. Then Frank and Barney left the airship upon a tour of exploration.

There seemed no need of carrying weapons, as the vicinity was apparently clear of enemies.

Yet they carried their rifles, for there were quite a number of a species of duck in the valley, which would make good eating if they could be bagged.

Leaving the Arrow in Pomp's charge, Barney and Frank set out across the valley to a distant lake.

The intervening distance seemed to be a heavy crust of saline composition, and as the two explorers went on they became impressed with a curious fact.

This was that the crust seemed to give forth a hollow sound, as if there was space beneath it.

Frank exchanged glances with Barney, who said:

"Bogorra, Misther Frank, isn't that a bit queer?"

"It is," replied the young inventor. "I believe it will bear investigation."

With this Frank threw himself flat upon the crust and applied his ear to it. He was rewarded with a curious phenomenon.

From beneath the crust there came strange, gurgling sounds, as if a mighty current of water was there surging along.

What did it mean?

Was the crust a covering for a mighty saline lake or basin of water, or perhaps one of those curious underground rivers?

This was not a question easily answered.

Frank attempted investigation in various ways. He tapped on the crust, and it gave back a resonant sound.

Then he drew forth his hunting knife and began digging an orifice in the crust.

Barney helped him.

And as they dug down into the crust, which readily yielded, the better satisfied they became that there was a hollow beneath.

Soon an orifice two feet in depth had been dug.

Yet they had not reached the bottom of the crust. Here they were obliged to pause in something of a quandary.

By lying upon their faces it was hard work to excavate the hole deeper. But Barney cried:

"Shure, sor, if yez will put this rope about me waist I'll get down in there and dig."

"Good!" cried Frank. "Then if the crust gives way you will not sink into the depths."

This was plainly the only and best plan.

The rope Barney had brought with him for use in an emergency, and it now came into good play.

He quickly tied it about his waist, and cried:

"All roight, sor! It's all ready, I am."

Frank held the end of the rope, and Barney leaped into the orifice, which was large enough in circumference for him to get into.

But before the Celt could resume digging there was a cracking sound. Frank felt a momentary strain on the rope, and then it was slack.

Barney had gone out of sight in a twinkling. A slow sense of horror crept over Frank.

He realized all

The noose had slipped, the crust had given way, Barney had gone down into unknown depths.

CHAPTER VII.

THE UNDERGROUND RIVER.

"Oh, my goodness!" gasped the young inventor, "horrible! Barney, are you safe? Answer me!"

Frank leaned over the edge of the orifice and looked downward.

The sight which met his gaze was a remarkable one. He had never seen anything like it before.

He looked down into what seemed like a mighty cavern, with pillars and columns of white marble.

Below he saw the swirling waters of a stream, and there he saw Barney.

The Celt had landed upon his feet upon the floor of the cavern and by the shore of the underground river.

He instantly sprang up unharmed, and as Frank looked down, he shouted:

"Bogorra, it's all roight I am, Misther Frank! phwat the divil kind av a place is this?"

"Thank heaven, you are safe, Barney!" cried Frank. "The rope must have slipped."

"An' so it did, sor; but I'm all roight jest the same."

"Shall I lower the rope and pull you up?"

"Wait a moment, sor, an' I'll take a luk about. I'll foin place down here."

Frank was ready to agree with him on this point. Indeed, he would have much liked to have joined the Celt.

But he hardly dared do this. So he cried:

"All right, Barney. Take a good look about and tell me all about it when you come up."

"Faith, I'll thry an' do that, sor."

And to the best of his ability Barney proceeded to lay out this programme.

He saw that as far as the eye could reach there were caverns and arches and pillars of the hard salt.

It was literally an underground world. Light came through the white crust overhead, which was exceedingly thin in some places.

A wide river swept resistlessly through its underground channel. That it might run to the sea was possible.

The Celt noted all this carefully, and then saw that it was useless to continue his exploration further.

So he returned to the orifice where Frank was awaiting him, and cried:

"All roight, sor. Pull away as fast as ye plaze."

"Are you ready to come up?" asked Frank.

"Yis, sor."

So Frank pulled the Celt up to the upper world. Barney tumbled out on the crust, and cried:

"Shure, I'd niver loike to live down there. I'd niver expect to get out ag'in if I did."

"Well, what sort of a place is it?" asked Frank.

The Celt described it to the best of his ability. Frank listened, and then said:

"Surely this is a wonderful freak of nature. The Great Basin is truly a region of wonders and of mystery."

"Yez are roight, sor."

"You saw no living creatures down there?"

"Divil a bit, sor."

Then suddenly each stopped talking and stood spell-bound.

A startling sound had come to their ears. It came from the orifice in the saline crust.

It was a chorus of voices in the distance, pitched in the strange, harsh melody.

"Begorra, phwat's that?" gasped Barney.

"Human voices," said Frank.

Each threw himself flat and gazed down through the orifice. And as they did so they witnessed a startling sight.

A canoe with four painted Indians in it drifted down the current of the underground river.

The savages were chanting some strange words and kept time with the sweep of their paddles.

They were quickly out of sight, and all unwitting the presence of the two spectators above.

For a few moments Barney and Frank were speechless. Then drawing a deep breath, the young inventor arose.

"I am of the opinion that there are many mysteries in this place, of which we are not yet aware, Barney," he said. "Do you think those savages live underground?"

"Begorra, I think not, sor."

"You are right; this river somewhere emerges again into the light. They are on their way thither."

Perhaps this is some hiding place for the omadhouns, Barney thought.

Perhaps so. At any rate we must keep our eyes peeled, for we may run across some of the rascals when we are looking for them."

"That's roight, sor."

They now left the orifice, and once more strode across the saline plain.

Frank was anxious to visit a distant hillock, which looked peculiar, and when they reached it he saw that it was an extinct geyser.

He was making a cursory examination of it when a startling sight met his gaze.

There, imbedded in the silica, was the bleached skeleton of a human being. There it must have lain for many years.

Frank examined the skeleton carefully. From the shape of the cranium he adjudged that it was that of a white man.

"Poor chap," he reflected. "What could have led to his awful fate? Perhaps he was overwhelmed by a discharge from the geyser."

Who the unknown was, or what the story of his fate, would never be known. This was certain.

Frank had made all the exploration he deemed necessary, and was about to return to the spot where Barney was awaiting him, when a thrilling cry reached him.

"Arrah, Mither Frank, cum quick! Shure, it's a bad schrape we are in!"

In a moment Frank leaped down from the geyser.

"What's wrong, Barney?" he cried.

The Celt had cocked his rifle and was in an apparent state of intense excitement.

"Shure, sor, wud yez luk yender! It's the divils 'av Injins!"

Frank looked in the direction indicated. He saw, as well as Barney had, that a number of skulking forms were lurking along the edge of the basin.

They were between the explorers and the airship, and their purpose was plain, which was to cut them off.

For a moment Frank was thrilled. Then he set his lips tightly.

"They are savages," he said. "We've got to stand them, Barney."

"Begorra, it luks loike it, sor. How shall we do it?"

Frank knew that to venture out on the crust was to invite death, for they would be certain targets for the savages.

So he refrained from doing this. He saw that their main hope was to creep along the edge of the basin and make a detour on the side furthest from the savages.

There was also a chance that Pomp might see them and come to their aid. He would be almost certain to do this as soon as firing began.

So Frank did not allow himself to worry over the situation.

"I think we can outwit them, Barney," he said. "At least we will try it."

"Phwativer yez say, sor, is the law," replied Barney.

"Then," said Frank, "I think we had better take the opposite side of the basin there."

"All roight, sor."

At the same moment Barney gave a slight start synonymous with the distant crack of a rifle.

It was a bullet from the hostile foe, and had barely missed the Celt's skull.

"Begorra, I'll return that favor," cried the Irishman.

Quick as a flash he threw his rifle to his shoulder and fired.

A distant yell of agony attested that his aim had been more accurate; then both set out around the basin.

Bullets now came flying after them, and it was evident that the foe were in hot pursuit.

Occasionally pausing to exchange shots, they kept on.

They were fully half a mile from the airship. It seemed more than likely that Pomp would hear the firing.

If he should, it would certainly seem as if he must come to their succor. So thought the fugitives.

And their premise found verification.

Pomp did hear the firing, and guessed the reason therefor. He at once proceeded to hastily come to the rescue.

He sent the airship up a few hundred feet; this gave him a chance to look over the surrounding region.

And just then Frank and Barney saw the Arrow high in the air.

"Begorra, the naygur is coming to help us!" cried Barney.

"It is lucky for us, too," declared Frank. "It looks as if we would be hemmed in."

This was true.

The savages had deployed about the basin in such a manner and so expeditiously, that in a very short time they would have completely hemmed in the aerial voyagers.

But the Arrow was grandly coming to the rescue.

Pomp saw his friends, and at once comprehended their position. He quickly opened fire upon the savages.

This resulted in their speedy discomfiture, and the Arrow descended quite near the spot where were Frank and Barney. In a few moments they were aboard.

"You came just in the nick of time, Pomp!" cried Frank. "If you had procrastinated we would have been in a bad fix."

Just at that moment a bullet whistled over the deck.

"Begorra, we're not safe at all yet," cried Barney. "I'm afther thinkin' we'd better get out av this!"

"Right you are, Barney," cried Frank. "Let the ship go up, Pomp!"

The darky needed no second bidding. He pressed lever and the Arrow sprang upward.

Up she went like a meteor. Soon she was sailing away to the southward, leaving the astonished Indians to after her.

The Arrow now for some days kept on her southward course. Frank held her more to the westward, and day announced:

"We are now over the boundary line of Nevada, Arizona. The Grand Canyon of the Colorado River very near here. I think we will spend some time in exploring it."

"Dat am berry good, Marse Frank!" cried Pomp; "chile am in fo' dat."

So the Arrow began slowly to descend.

She had been very high in the air, but now objects low became quite visible and distinguishable.

CHAPTER VIII.

AT DON PEDRO'S RANCH.

The scene below was truly a most remarkable one.

The aerial voyagers gazed upon it with deepest interest and not a little of wonderment.

All the scenery they had so far witnessed was not to be classed with this. It was certainly par excellence.

Far below was the long range of hills. Deep cut through these was the awful chasm through which flowed the river.

The Colorado looked like a ribbon of white so far below at the bottom of that awful gorge.

In reality it was a powerful river, with awful rapids and tremendous cataracts.

Its roar could be heard even at that distance in the air. It was an impressive spectacle.

In some places the walls of the canyon were fully a thousand feet high. This was a dizzy height.

Frank allowed the airship to descend into the gorge. Down it floated between the awful walls of stone.

Huge vultures and mighty eagles were frightened by their cries, and hung overhead with startled screams in wild circles.

Down sank the airship until quite near the foaming, boiling torrent. Suddenly Pomp gave a cry.

"Golly fo' glory, look at de likes ob dat!" he screamed.
 "What?" cried Frank.

But already he had looked up the stream in the direction indicated by Pomp. The spectacle he beheld was a most thrilling one.

Borne down on the swift current was the trunk of a tree. To this clung a man in the costume of a ranchero.

He was clinging for life to the tree, and his face upturned was white and ghastly.

It was evident that he was the victim of a most deadly species of terror. He probably felt certain that death must be his portion.

For just below there was a tremendous cataract. To be carried over this would be death.

"My goodness!" gasped Frank; "that man is in a terrible position."

"Bejabers, can't we do something to save him?" cried Barney.

"We must," agreed Frank; "keep the airship just over him, Pomp."

This the darky did, and most skillfully, too, evading the sharp angles of the canyon.

Frank leaned over the rail, and shouted:

"Hello! down there!"

"Merci, senors!" came back. "Save Pedro, if you can. We will pay you well."

"Keep cool and steady! We will save you!"

Frank saw that the fellow was a Mexican, probably a rancher, who had fallen into the stream in some way.

Quickly the young inventor threw over a coil of rope and made a noose in it.

Down it fell within easy reach of the luckless ranchero. He gripped it with both hands.

This swung him clear of the tree, which the next moment he went plunging over the cataract.

It was a narrow escape for the Mexican. The next moment he was swinging in the air.

Up went the airship to the summit of the cliffs. Here the rescued man was swung safely over upon terra firma.

He instantly released the hold of the rope and waved his hands joyfully in appreciation of the rescue.

"Let the ship down, Pomp," cried Frank.

The airship settled until it touched the ground, and then the summit of the cliffs.

Then Frank sprang out and approached the rescued man.

He was dark and swarthy, yet with a not bad expression of countenance. He held out his hand, crying:

"Buenos, senor! I owe my life to you! You shall command me!"

"It is nothing," replied Frank. "May I ask your name?"

"Certainly, senor. I am Pedro Don Velasquez, and I own a ranch not far from here; one of the best in Arizona."

"I am pleased to meet you," replied Frank. "I am Frank Reade, Jr., the owner of this airship."

The Mexican had been regarding the Arrow intently. He now exclaimed in wonderment:

"That is a wonderful thing, senor. It is made to go in the air?"

"It is," replied Frank.

"On my honor, it is wonderful! But—what do you in this part of the world?"

"We are traveling for exploration," replied Frank; "and this seems a mighty field."

"It is that, senor. Many wonderful things there are in this region."

"May I ask how you came in so perilous a plight?" asked Frank.

"Certainly, senor. I was trying to cross the river on my lariat at a narrow point some miles above here. The lariat broke, and I fell into the river."

"I tried to breast the current, but could not do it. Then, in desperation, I came across the tree and clung to it. You know the rest."

"Indeed we do," declared Frank. "You were making a plucky fight for your life."

"Ay; but without your aid I would have perished. I do not forget that, senor."

"I am glad to have been able to serve you," replied Frank; "but how far, may I ask, is your ranch from here?"

"Not five miles," replied Pedro eagerly. "Will you not go thither with me? I will endeavor to treat you happily."

"I have no doubt you will," replied Frank, "and I will be very glad to accept your invitation. Will you not go aboard my airship?"

"A thousand thanks, senor."

Pedro clambered aboard the airship with Frank, who sent the Arrow up into the air.

So novel was the sensation to the ranchero that for a moment he was appalled.

But he speedily recovered, and there were not words enough in his vocabulary for him to express his joy and wonderment.

Before the ranch was reached he said, effusively:

"Your airship is very wonderful, senor. Will you not sell it? I will give you a very large price for it. I will give you my ranch and all my stock."

"I thank you," replied Frank, "but I am unable to accept your offer. I care not to sell."

The ranch of Don Pedro came into view. It was very similar to all structures of the kind in Arizona.

There were long sheds, a big yard fenced in stoutly, and a long, low adobe structure, which was the ranch proper.

In the yard were numbers of cowboys and many fine-looking horses. The scene was a lively one.

But as the airship appeared overhead a sensation was created.

Nothing of the kind, of course, had ever been seen by the rough cowboys. They were electrified.

Wildly they rushed to get their rifles, and no doubt they would have opened fire upon the airship but for Don Pedro.

The ranchero leaned over the rail, and shouted:

"Don't shoot! It is me, your master. Put up your rifles!"

Then he turned to Frank.

"Descend into the yard, senor," he said; "there is nothing to fear."

"Then you think they will not try to break the airship all to pieces?" asked Frank, anxiously.

"I can handle them," said Don Pedro, resolutely; "they will not disobey me."

So down settled the airship into the ranchyard. The cowboys had gathered in ominous groups about the yard.

But a few words from Don Pedro dispelled their fears. They advanced and became quite sociable.

Don Pedro descended from the airship and greeted them warmly. He explained the mechanism of the airship to them as well as he could.

They listened with interest, and then gave cheers.

The airship was all right, in their eyes, after that. But Don Pedro now showed that he knew how to play the host.

Rich wines were brought forth, and merry revelry graced the occasion. All hands gathered to a bountiful feast.

This was broken, however, in a most thrilling manner. Suddenly into the ranchyard there dashed a cowboy upon a high-strung mustang.

The animal's flanks were dripping with blood from the effects of the cruel spurs. The rider was pale and covered with blood.

"Up, up!" he shouted, in Spanish; "the foe are coming! Jesu, have pity and preserve us all!"

Don Pedro was instantly upon his feet. He gave orders in a quick and hurried manner.

The peons and cowboys rushed to close the gates of the stockyard. Rifles were brought out.

Preparations were made for a battle. Then Frank found an opportunity to ask:

"What is going to happen, senor? Is it Indians coming?"

"Indians!" exclaimed Don Pedro, with great agitation. "No; if that were all we would not complain. It is worse than that!"

"What could be worse?"

"We are to be attacked by white men, the scum of the border, the gang of mountain outlaws under Red Miguel. He will leave nothing of us or our ranch but ashes."

"Mercy! he must be a fiend!" cried Frank.

"Si, senor, that he is," replied the ranchero. "Nobody gets quarter from him."

Frank compressed his lips. An inward resolution was his.

"Bejabers, there's loively toimes at hand!" cried Barney. "shure, Misther Frank, can't we be afther hilpin' thime."

"We will try, Barney," replied Frank. "At least, Miguel shall not burn this ranch if I can help it."

Frank knew well that the curse of ranch life was the deadly Apache and the merciless outlaw.

These foes must needs be guarded against all the time.

They were apt, at any moment, to descend upon and destroy any ranch.

The cowboys and other habitues of Don Pedro's ranch worked like beavers to prepare for the attack of Miguel.

"We will give him a hard fight, senor," declared Don Pedro. "We shall die very hard."

"You must defeat the villains!" cried Frank, vehemently. "They shall not burn this ranch while I can help it!"

CHAPTER IX.

OVER THE STAKED PLAINS.

Frank Reade, Jr., meant every word he said. Don Pedro, however, did not attach the necessary significance to it.

He smiled in a dreary sort of way, and thanked Frank. He could not see how the airship could do Red Miguel much harm.

Every man in the stockade was prepared to die for his life. They knew that it was fight or die. They preferred the former, even though it might mean death.

Barney and Pomp were only awaiting Frank's

ands. They were more than eager to take part in the little so imminent.

Frank, however, was not yet ready.

The outlaws were descending upon the ranch openly and with great force.

Evidently they counted upon an easy victory.

Frank Reade, Jr., smiled.

"We will fool them," he said, coolly. "They shall not have an easy time."

Already firing had begun.

The outlaws were drawing a cordon about the ranch. By this they hoped to besiege their intended victims.

Don Pedro's men were valiantly defending the stockade, though it was very evident that they were greatly outnumbered by the outlaws.

Frank went forward to a loophole in the stockade and watched the affair for a time.

Then he saw that the outlaws were almost certain to get the best of the ranchmen.

They were better armed, better disciplined, and accustomed to fighting.

Barney had joined Frank, and now said:

"Beggorra, Misther Frank, it's a hard-lukin' lot av vilyuns by are. Shure, I'm afther thinkin' they'll drive our people to the wall."

"We will have to help them," agreed Frank; "there is no doubt of that."

With this the young inventor turned and walked back to the airship. He met Don Pedro.

The ranchero looked worried.

"I fear the worst, senor," he said. "Red Miguel is merciless, and his men are fiends."

"I think we can drive them back," said Frank. "I am going to do all I can to help you."

"A thousand thanks, senor. You are more than kind."

At this moment there was a fearful clatter at the ranch gates.

The foe had made a concerted attack, and were in great force at this point. The cowboys were valiantly defending the gate.

But the savage outlaws were rapidly forcing their way into the yard. Once they should gain it, the fate of all in the stockade would be sealed.

Frank now delayed no longer.

He sprang into the airship.

"Come, Barney and Pomp," he shouted. "Stand ready with your repeaters."

The two servitors soon responded. In a few moments

they were at the rail of the airship and opening fire upon the outlaws.

Frank pressed the valve and sent the airship up.

Up, until it was fully five hundred feet in the air it went. The outlaws paused a moment in amazement at the sight.

This was the first they had seen of the airship, and its appearance, no doubt, surprised them.

Barney and Pomp had opened a rapid fire upon them with their repeaters.

This brought the outlaws to their senses, and they at once responded. The bullets rattled against the hull of the airship.

But they did no further damage.

Of course the co-operation of the airship in the defense of the ranch had its effect.

But yet the outlaws were gaining ground. Frank saw that more extreme measures must be adopted.

So he proceeded to act accordingly.

From a locker he took several small-sized dynamite bombs.

Frank was averse to human slaughter.

He had it in his power to destroy nearly every one of the murderous crew below, but he would not do this.

He aimed only to repulse them. So he selected the smallest of the deadly bombs.

He leaned over the bow of the airship and held one of the bombs suspended.

It was a risky position, as was quickly made manifest. A bullet came whistling up and cut a hole in his sleeve.

Frank smiled grimly, and dropped the bomb.

It fell in the foremost rank of the outlaws. The result was thrilling.

There was a terrific explosion. Shattered human forms went flying into the air. A hole was blown in the earth, which made a literal grave for many.

The outlaws for a moment wavered.

Such an attack as this from the air above them was something to terrify and discourage them.

Frank saw his opportunity and dropped another bomb. The result was terrific.

Another and another followed. The cowboys fiercely rallied.

This was too much for the outlaws. It was more than human brawn and muscle could stand.

They wavered, fell back, and then broke incontinently. In a few moments they were in wild retreat over the plain.

The cowboys pursued them, even to the hills, and Red Miguel himself was shot and killed.

It was a permanent breaking up of the worst gang of outlaws in the southwest. They never recovered.

Frank and Barney and Pomp met with an ovation when they descended to the earth once more.

Don Pedro was very enthusiastic, and fairly embraced Frank.

"You have done a wonderful thing, senior," he cried. "Our people will never forget you."

The ranch people did all in their power to make the stay of the aerial voyagers pleasant.

A couple of days were spent at the ranch, and then Frank decided that they must proceed on their journey.

He left Don Pedro's ranch amid the cheers of the cowboys, and soon the airship was sailing away once again to the eastward.

After a day's travel over Arizona, Frank changed his course to the southeast, planning to cross the Rio Grande at El Paso.

A wonderful region it was which the airship sailed over now. Barren plains, arid deserts, jagged mountains and great jungles and swamps.

Crossing the Santa Catarina Mountains the Arrow passed north of Tombstone, and soon had reached the boundary line in the vicinity of Fort Bowie.

They were now in New Mexico. Another day's flight and they were across the line into Texas.

Here the scenery underwent a great change.

The Pecos River was crossed, and now they entered upon the mighty Staked Plains, which are the wonder of the Southwest.

Here they came upon rolling plains of sweet, succulent grass. Buffaloes and wild horses grazed in the lowlands and along the river courses.

Occasionally they spied a ranch far below, and thousands of the long-horned cattle out on the range.

It was occupation of the most interesting sort to watch the ever-changing panorama so far below.

Not until well out on the great Staked Plain did Frank conclude to make a descent.

Then an incident occurred which caused him to do so perhaps a little sooner than he had intended.

The airship was perhaps a thousand feet in the air above some bottom lands, when Frank saw a puff of smoke rising from a belt of timber just beyond.

This was an indication that some human beings were in the timber, and Frank was at once interested.

"I done fink dere am a camp in dem trees, Marse Frank," said Pomp.

"Hark!" exclaimed the young inventor. "Do you hear anything peculiar?"

All did hear faintly the distant crack of firearms.

Frank had thought from the first that the thin, blue wreaths looked like powder smoke.

He was satisfied now.

"There's a fight going on in there!" he declared. "Let us see what it is."

At once all were interested.

As the airship now descended lower, the whip-like reports of the rifles could be plainly heard.

Certainly a lively battle was going on in the timber.

Suddenly a riderless pony burst from the trees and was careering across the plain. It had an Indian saddle upon its back.

As the airship, like a huge bird, settled down over a clump of trees, the din became louder.

Indian war-whoops, and the loud, stern shouts of warriors, told the tale. Down floated the airship.

And now a deep clearing was seen among the trees. Here was a collection of cabins.

There were several dismantled prairie schooners lying about, and all the evidences of an attempt at a settlement.

In the trees and the copse were a legion of redskins, who were firing upon the cabins.

"We'll soon put an end to that," said Frank, grimly.

He threw a bomb down among the savages. It exploded with terrific force.

Then the savages looked up and saw the airship.

The effect was terrifying to them. Such a monster floating in the air above their heads was a foe which they had never cared to court combat with.

They instantly leaped upon their ponies and fled with wild yells of terror.

Frank sent bombs after them until he had thoroughly terrorized them. Then he turned his attention to the settlement.

The white settlers, with the dispersing of the Indians, had rushed from their cabins.

They were fully as much astonished as the savages at the appearance of the airship.

But they were better able to understand its character, though it amazed them not a little.

As Frank allowed the Arrow to descend they all sent up a great shout.

This was answered by Barney and Pomp.

Down settled the airship into the clearing. In a moment it was surrounded.

CHAPTER X.

FIGHT WITH COMANCHES.

Men, women and children flocked about the Arrow.

They were the type of Western settlers, hard working men and women, scantily clad, but yet intelligent and large heart.

A tall, brawny man, evidently the leading spirit, came forward, and addressed Frank:

"Waal, stranger, welcome to Pecan! Yer ther fust people we hev ever seen that travel in ther air."

"What kind of a new-fangled rig do ye call that, any?" cried another of the frontiersmen.

"This is an airship," replied Frank.

"An airship? Waal, I'll be dumfusticated! What new tinkles will they put up next?"

"Waal, we're powerful glad to see ye, stranger!"

"Yer welcome tew Pecan!"

"Light down an' stop with us awhile. We ain't so terrible high-toned, but we're glad tew welcome strangers."

"Thank you very much," replied Frank. "You were doing a bit of a scrimmage with the redskins as we came."

"Yaas; yew helped us out of a bad hole. If yew hadn't a jest as ye did, they'd like enough hev licked us bad."

"It did look that way," said Frank. "What tribe are they?"

"Limber Jack's passel of Comanches. They're wuss pizen."

Frank stepped out of the airship, and shook hands with Limber of the denizens.

The leader of the settlement was a brawny six-footer, and gave his name as Dan Pilkins.

The settlement was named Pecan, from the great number of pecan trees which grew in the vicinity.

"It was, altogether, not a bad spot to locate, though a little way from any other evidences of civilization."

"We're goin' ter pre-empt all this big range," explained Dan Pilkins; "then we'll have some of ther best land that lays out in the Southwest. I reckon it's pooty rich an' comfortable hereabouts."

"It looks it," agreed Frank; "but you must be pretty careful on your guard against the savages."

"Yes; they light down on us about every week. But we whipped them every time until to-day."

"And you whipped them to-day."

"Yaas," agreed Pilkins, with a laugh, "but with yure help."

Old Limber Jack, their chief, is a half-breed. He's

death on the whites, an' has sworn tew hev my scalp. I don't intend he shall have it if I kin help it."

"That is right," agreed Frank. "Keep up good pluck. Are they likely to return to the attack?"

"Oh, yes; most any time."

"Well, perhaps I had better remain around here until they do."

"That's kind of ye, stranger, an' we appreciate it much, I kin tell ye. Jest as ye please."

Before the conversation could go further, though, a sensation occurred.

Into the clearing there dashed a small, black pony, upon which was mounted a slender boy.

He nearly fell from the little steed as he drew close by the cabin door.

His boyish face was pallid and drawn, and he gasped:

"Oh, Dan Pilkins, Nellie is gone!"

"What's that, Willie Norris?" cried the frontiersman, sharply. "Yer sister Nellie?"

"Yes, Dan, an' dad sent me back tew tell ye tew come tew help him chase ther Comanches. They've carried her off!"

Pilkins' face was like a sheet. He turned to Frank, trembling like a leaf.

"What is this?" asked Frank, sharply.

"My goodness, it's awful!" groaned Dan Pilkins; "that's a family named Morris live out hyar on ther Branch Creek trail. It's a lonely spot, but they've never been troubled till now. Nellie Morris is ther gal I was to make my wife next week. But if Limber Jack has got her, then she's lost tew me forever."

The big plainsman's voice broke into an agonized wail.

"When did this happen?" asked Frank of the boy.

"About an hour ago, sir."

Dan Pilkins was weak but for a moment. Then he showed that he was of the stuff of which heroes are made.

"Come, boys," he shouted, "git yer barkers an' cum along with me. By ther eternal, if I have tew follow that redskin tew kingdom come I'll resky that gal."

A hoarse yell went up from the rough frontiersmen.

Not one of them but bounded forward in answer to the call. They were willing to sell their lives for pretty Nellie Morris.

Frank listened to all this with a thrill.

His blood tingled in his veins.

He would not have been a man with human impulse could he have resisted the wave of sympathy which swept over him.

He gripped the plainsman's arm.

"Pilkins," he said.

The latter turned about.

"What is it?" he asked.

"This young girl is in the hands of the Indians. It will be hard for you to rescue her in the way you are going about it."

"Wall?"

"I am going with you. My airship and my services are at your disposal."

"God bless ye!" cried the frontiersman, in a choking voice. "Ye'll git yer pay fer it."

In less time than it takes to tell it half a hundred ponies were saddled and ready for the trail.

But Pilkins said:

"We kain't all go an' leave ther wimmen alone. Some on us must stay and protect them!"

Half of the men, it was decided, were to remain and protect the settlement.

The other half, twenty-five in number, were to go forth with Pilkins on the trail.

This settled, no time was lost in setting out.

It was arranged that the airship was to follow on behind them. When the Indian settlement should be reached then its services could be called into requisition.

So the party left Pecan.

Out onto the plains they rode at a swift gallop, a deadly determined band of men.

They were fully resolved to bring Nellie Morris home alive, or die in the attempt.

Frank and Barney and Pomp in the airship followed the troop. Across the plains they rode.

For miles the swinging gallop was kept up.

Then after awhile a heavy belt of timber was reached. As they were skirting this the crack of firearms was heard and two of the settlers dropped from their horses.

The savages had fired from an ambush. There was not a moment to lose.

"Right and left! Scatter to cover!" cried Dan Pilkins.

The order was instantly obeyed.

Some of the settlers went over a rise of land near, and others sought the cover of a copse.

In less time than it takes to tell it all had reached some sort of covert.

Then the battle began, and waged fiercely for a time.

The Indians were well ensconced in the timber. It would have been ordinarily impossible for the settlers to have driven them out.

But Frank Reade, Jr., in the airship, was not idle.

The Arrow sailed about over the heads of the savages.

Frank was desirous first of learning if Nellie Morris was in the custody of this band.

He saw that the Comanches were directed by a tall, slender chief, whom he concluded was Limber Jack.

Then Barney cried:

"Shure, Misther Frank, there's some koind av a wigwam out there among the trees, sor. I reckon the gurrul must be in that."

"Perhaps so," philosophized Frank. "We will find it."

The wigwam was really an Indian tepee, hastily erected in the shade of a spreading walnut.

Frank let the airship drift over this.

Then he pressed the lever and let it descend until within a hundred feet of the ground.

A number of the savages had congregated here and were firing at the airship.

The bullets rattled about it so thickly that it was almost impossible to risk a look over the rail.

But suddenly Barney cried:

"Beggorra, Misther Frank, there she is! Shure, the girl is takin' her away!"

Frank looked over the rail and beheld a thrilling sight.

A burly savage had rushed from the tepee. In his arms he was carrying a young girl who seemed to have fainted.

Upon the back of a pony the savage sprang and dashed away through the timber.

A moment later he was out upon the prairie and riding like mad.

Frank saw what the trick was at once and was delighted.

He saw at once it was going to be easy to rescue Nellie Morris.

He cried to Barney:

"Pursue them; let the airship go ahead!"

"All roight!" cried the Celt, with alacrity.

The airship, of course, could outspeed the Indian. For a mile the race was hot, the Arrow bearing down upon the savage.

Then the pony's speed began to flag.

Frank leaned over the rail and shouted:

"Don't be foolish, Indian. Let up and I'll spare your life. If you don't it will be the worse for you."

In reply the savage brandished a huge knife, and made motions to show that he would stab the girl if he was interfered with.

But Frank was not to be bluffed so easily as all that.

"Give me my rifle, Barney," he said.

Barney obeyed, and Frank drew a careful line upon the air. The savage would have fired, but at that moment another thing occurred.

Suddenly the pony stepped into a gopher hole and went down. The savage and his fair charge instantly were down to the prairie.

CHAPTER XI.

AT COMFORT CITY.

It was no light fall which they received, either. The ridge lay like one dead.

Indeed, the fall had broken his neck, as after investigation proved. But Frank cried:

Down with the airship, Barney!"

The Celt obeyed. The Arrow descended to the level of the prairie. Then Frank and Pomp leaped out.

They rushed quickly to the spot where the girl captive

lay. Even as Frank lifted her head he saw that she was unconscious.

A few drops of brandy quickly revived her.

In a few moments she was quite herself again and overcame her dizziness to know that she was rescued.

"The last I knew," she declared, "was when this savage seized me into the tepee and seized me in his arms. I fainted once."

"Well, you are safe now," cried Frank. "I think you better go aboard my airship with me."

"You are very kind," replied the young girl, "but—I live far from here——"

"I shall take you home," said Frank, reassuringly; "have no fears. Your friends are all over yonder in the timber fighting the Indians. Are you acquainted with Dan Morris?"

She blushed a vivid scarlet.

"Is he over there?" she asked.

"He is," replied Frank. "We all started from Pecan at the same time. You had better come aboard."

Still she hesitated. At this Frank laughed.

"It is all safe," he said. "No doubt it will seem odd flying through the air, but no harm will come to you."

The girl laughed and then climbed aboard the Arrow. It sent it up a few hundred feet.

When he reached the timber he was gratified to find that the savages were driving the savages.

To expedite matters he sent a few bombs into the ranks of the red foe. This dispersed them hastily.

The battle was over and the whites were victorious.

Morris was rescued unharmed.

Over Jack's scalp hung at the girdle of a red ally of

the white settlers. It was hardly likely that the Comanches would be able to go upon the warpath for many a day.

The reunion between Nellie and her parents and with Dan Pilkins was a most happy one.

The aerial voyagers were the heroes of the hour.

The Pecanites were extremely effusive and eager that the voyagers should give them an opportunity to offset the good turn done them.

But Frank politely declined, and insisted upon saying good-by to them and continuing the voyage.

So the little settlement of Pecan was left late that afternoon, and the airship went on its way to the eastward.

All that night the airship kept on its way by the light of the searchlight.

But the voyagers were destined not to get out of Texas without some more exciting adventures.

The next day a range of hills came into view. Deep down in the heart of these was a small frontier town.

To Frank's surprise he learned that it was a mining town. There were rich placers in the hills, and these were being worked.

There were several thousand red-shirted miners in the place. There were stores, saloons and a hotel.

Over the hills a stage route led away toward the Arkansas trail. This was the only means of communication with the civilized world the miners had.

"Golly!" cried Pomp, "dat am what dey calls a mushroom town, amn't it?"

"I believe you're right, Pomp," cried Frank. "Suppose we pay it a visit?"

Barney and Pomp were extremely agreeable. The airship settled down into the valley.

The appearance of the aerial wonder created a sensation in the valley.

People rushed out of the stores and saloons, the miners quit work, and great excitement reigned.

As the airship descended into the principal square of the town an immense throng gave it reception.

For a time Frank was doubtful as to what kind of a reception he would get. Almost every nationality on the face of the globe was represented in the throng below.

Frank held the airship suspended a few hundred feet above the crowd. The air was filled with cries of salutation.

"Come down to the earth, pilgrims."

"What kind of a ternal arrangement is that, anyway?"

"Did ye come from the moon?"

There were Irishmen, Spaniards, half-breeds, Chinamen, and all classes of men in the excited crowd.

Frank went to the rail.

"Hello!" he shouted. "Who's the boss of all you people?"

"We don't own any boss," came back the defiant cry.

"This is a free town in a free country."

"Well, then, who represents you?"

"We represent ourselves," was the retort.

"All right, I suppose so. But have you no public officers?"

"Oh, he wants the mayor," was the cry. "Cum, Gillooly, git up thar and make a speech."

A tall miner in a red shirt and top-boots mounted a barrel. He waved his arms and shouted:

"I'm the mayor of Comfort City. Who are ye?"

"I am Frank Reade, Jr., and this is my airship," replied the young inventor. "I am traveling through the West for pleasure."

"Oh, ye are? Then I'll make ye welcome to Comfort City. Come down and shake hands on it."

"Will we be kindly received?" asked Frank.

"Wall, yew kin bet nobody will hurt ye while ye've got Jim Gillooly on yer ticket," replied the mayor, confidently. "Come along down."

"All right," shouted Frank. "Make space down there."

The crowd fell back, and the airship descended in their midst.

For the next hour Frank was well employed in explaining the wonderful mechanism of the airship to the curious denizens of the town.

But in spite of their lawless freedom of speech and action they were extremely respectful to the voyagers.

Indeed, Frank was speedily fast friends with the loquacious mayor.

Then the crowd insisted on drinks all around. Frank must needs leave the airship and repair to a saloon near.

The young inventor did not drink, but accepted cigars and made himself quite at home.

He inquired about the mines, and was much interested in valuable descriptions given him by the miners.

Thus matters were, when suddenly a great cry went up:

"Ther stage! Ther stage! Hyar comes ther stage!"

The arrival of the stage in Comfort City was a matter of no slight moment.

It was the most exciting event of the day, and all denizens of the place were wont to crowd into the office where the mail was generally distributed and the arrivals were booked.

As the great eight-horse stage rolled up to the hotel Frank was much interested.

He had heard much of these great overland stages, was anxious to witness the arrival.

The driver, a stout, bronzed-visaged man, with a brimmed hat, threw down his ribbons and leaped from the box.

A number of hostlers hastily unhitched the stage horses and hurried them away to the stables.

Out of the coach a number of people came. They all Easterners, as their dress betokened, and they looked white and scared.

And now from the top of the coach two men helped lift down a third. He was unconscious and covered with blood.

At once all was excitement.

"What's the matter, Dan Haynes?" cried Mayor Gillooly as he confronted the driver. "What happened ye or way up?"

"It was Silver Jake," replied the driver, tersely; "he got six thousand in gold out of these tenderfeet. Ther wust man on top foolishly showed fight, an' that's what he got for."

"Mercy on us!" cried Frank in horror, "this is the work of highwaymen!"

"Road agents, my friend," said the mayor, nonchalantly. "Oh, I tell ye that Silver Jake is the wust man in the parts. When he says stop tew a stage, it's got tew stop."

"But why do you submit to such an outrage?" asked Frank.

"Eh?" exclaimed Gillooly, in surprise. "What question?"

"Why do you submit so tamely?"

The mayor shrugged his shoulders.

"Yew are new," he said. "This is ther wild and wust, friend! It ain't New York, yew bet!"

"Yes; but Uncle Sam's laws govern this country!"

"Yas; but they don't count for much hyarabouts! They would hev to stand a deal of shootin' to wipe out Silver Jake an' his gang."

"Then you propose to submit to having all your stages bed?"

Gillooly looked hard at Frank.

"Praps you know a remedy?" he said.

"I think I do," replied the young inventor, coolly.

"What is it, stranger?"

"Appoint vigilance committees and hunt the rascals out of the country."

Gillooly snapped his fingers.

"You can't do it," he said. "Silver Jake can hold the States army at bay in his den up thar in ther hills. I ye he is a hard one to beat."

Frank drew a deep breath.

"Then you propose to submit to it and let him rob you

"What kin we do?"

"You are anxious to have the evil remedied?"

"What if I will do it for you?"

"You?"

"Yes."

"Do you mean hang Silver Jake?"

"Yes—bring him to justice. That would be justice for

Gillooly regarded Frank as if he doubted his sanity.

"Now ain't jokin'?" he asked.

"Not a bit of it."

"Well, then, by thunder!" cried the mayor of Comfort blusily, "if you kin do what you say we'll erect a monument over yure body."

CHAPTER XII.

SILVER JAKE CAPTURED—THE END.

At a moment Frank was at a loss to comprehend the of the mayor's reply.

"What do you mean?" he asked.

"You mean that it would be necessary to erect a monument for yew would never do Silver Jake up and live of it."

Gillooly spoke with apparent sincerity. Frank understood him well now.

"Why, that is strange," he declared; "you have an unwanted amount of fear of this man."

"Ah, there's reason for that, pilgrim," declared the mayor, impressively; "he's an awful man. Nobody ever yit tried tew corner him an' lived tew tell of it. Mebbe yew kin, but I'm powerfully inclined tew doubt it."

"Mr. Gillooly," said Frank, impressively, "I'm going to drive this villain out of your hills. You can thank me for it or not, just as you please. I am interested in his defeat."

"Wall, I like yer grit!" declared the mayor of Comfort City. "Go on, if ye feel like it; I'll help ye all I can."

"You will?"

"Yes."

"Then when your stage goes up again put some armed men aboard of it. I will go along in my airship."

"Do you mean it?"

"I do."

Gillooly held out his hand.

"I believe ye'll win," he declared. "Ye're the right stuff. I'll do jesh as ye say."

The stage remained at Comfort City three hours. Then preparations were made for it to leave upon the return.

True to his word, Gillooly got aboard with a dozen armed men besides the passengers. Thus the party set forth.

The rumor had spread everywhere that the aerial voyagers were going to cope with Silver Jake.

Of course the excitement was great.

Odds were freely given that they would win. Words can hardly describe the situation.

The stage rolled out of Comfort City amid excited cheers. The airship quickly followed.

Frank did not allow the Arrow to ascend very high. He had a purpose in this, which was to, if possible, prevent the outlaws from seeing the stage.

Up through the Silver Hills the stage and airship went. Two hours of hard climbing brought them into the Silver Pass.

It was here that all the stage robberies had been committed. Everybody was on the qui vive.

Darkness had shut down over the hills. The big airship followed on behind the stage.

No lights were visible aboard her. Frank had good reasons for this.

Would Silver Jake be on hand to hold up the stage to-night? Of course there was a possibility that he would not.

But suddenly, just as it seemed that the passage of the Pass was to be made in safety, the click of horses' hoofs was heard just ahead.

The gorge was instantly filled with dark, mounted forms.

A ray of light shot from a dark-lantern, and a stern voice cried:

"Hold your horses, Dan Haynes! Hold, or you're a dead man!"

Instantly the stage driver, who knew better than to refuse, pulled his animals back onto their haunches.

Then the robbers, armed to the teeth, swarmed alongside. The moment for action had come.

Frank pressed the motor lever. The airship swept forward and up over the stage.

Then down flashed the rays of the electric light. It revealed the whole scene below as plain as daylight.

"Give it to them, Barney and Pomp!" cried the young inventor. "Don't spare them!"

Crack—ack—ack!

The repeaters spoke in a continual roll. As fast as the two servitors could pull the triggers and aim, they fired.

Also Gillooly and his men began a pointblank fire.

Of course the robbers retaliated for a moment, but the startling appearance of that dazzling light so directly over their heads, and the terrific volley was too much for them.

They fell back and tried to form in line of battle in the gorge.

They could see nothing beyond that dazzling ball of light, while those behind it could see them plainly, and poured in upon them a merciless fire.

The outlaws stood it for a few moments. Then they wheeled their horses and fled.

But after them, like a Nemesis, came that infernal, unearthly ball of white light, and they were dropped in their tracks as fast as could be.

Finally a loud, commanding voice reached them.

"Stand where you are! Surrender, and your lives shall

be spared. If you do not, every one of you shall die a dog!"

This had the desired effect.

The fleeing outlaws reined in their horses. They down their weapons and held up their arms.

It was a complete surrender.

Frank held them under the powerful rays of the stage light until the stage came up.

Then Mayor Gillooly and his men secured and bound the captured outlaws; Silver Jake was among them.

Frank allowed the airship to descend. He stepped down and at once was met by Gillooly.

The mayor grabbed his hand.

"By ther great horn spoon!" he cried. "Yew have done ther biggest job for this region that ever was. I never saw the beat of it. Why, we've actually got Silver Jake himself!"

"Well," said Frank, coolly, "what did I tell you?"

"Certainly. Yew are a brick. Ther hull population of Comfort City want to do yew honor. Cum back wit us."

The stage was allowed to go on. But the prisoners were put on their own horses, and all started back to Comfort City.

Not one of the captors had received so much as a scratch. Fully a dozen of the road agents had been killed.

The airship sailed along down into the valley. In the course the party and their prisoners arrived.

The celebration held in Comfort City that night was a characteristic one. It was keenly enjoyed by the whole town.

They were the heroes of the hour, and could not be furnished with anything which would not be furnished them.

There was little sleep for anybody that night.

The next morning at sunrise Silver Jake and his companions hung from the branches of mountain pines. Their notorious career was forever ended.

Mayor Gillooly offered Frank a large lot of land in the center of the town free gratis, and promised to set up a subscription to build him a mansion if he would locate his abode in Comfort City.

"Why durn it! don't you see how it would pay up the irrepressible mayor. "We would hev a great card in yew. People would cum tew Comfort City locate by the thousands."

But Frank was obliged to decline the offer with

He made many urgent excuses, and prepared to leave the next day.

When the Arrow left Comfort City, at the end of an enthusiastic ovation, Frank set the course for the Mississippi.

From thence we will work up around the coast and to New York," he declared. "We shall then have covered fully ten thousand miles."

"Golly!" cried Pomp; "dis chile be bery glad indeed fo' see home once mo'."

"Ye are roight, naygur, an' the same here," averred Barney.

"Keep up good heart, and we will see the Atlantic coast in many days," declared Frank.

The airship kept on its way to the great Mississippi.

An attempt to detail all the incidents of the voyage would require much more space than we have at our command. When the airship reached the delta of the Father of Waters with the first thrilling incident occurred.

As the surging flood of waters was seen, it was noted that there was a great flood or overflow.

Logs and stumps, trees and driftwood of all kinds was borne down by the current.

Suddenly, as the aerial voyagers were noting all this, Barney cried:

"Me worrud, Mither Frank, there is a bit av a house in the current, too!"

It was seen to be true.

Truly borne along by the current was a heap of debris, and upon the top of it was a cabin. At first it was believed that the cabin was occupied.

Then Pomp cried:

"de Lor', Marse Frank, dar am somebody in dat cabin!"

It was true. Suddenly the tall form of a negro appeared in the doorway. Behind him were a half dozen little minnies and a stout wench.

On sight of the airship the negro fell upon his knees and prayed and exhorted wildly.

Amazed with his kind in the Mississippi swamps, he was so religious, and believed the airship was a messenger from God to save him and his flock.

"He ship down, Barney!" cried Frank. "We must

pick them up! If we don't they will be carried out to sea and lost."

Pomp's eyes were shining.

"Dat am jes' like yo', Marse Frank," he cried. "Yo' ain' gwine to see de po' black people perish."

"Certainly not," replied Frank. "They are human, just the same as we are. They must be saved."

Down sank the airship.

The aged negro prayed and shouted all the louder. This put Barney out of patience, and he shouted:

"Och! let up wid yez. Shure, we ain't angels, but jist ivery-day koind av min."

"Yo' hab come from de Lor' fo' to save ole Joe!" cried the darky, fervently. "It am de messengers ob God! Praise de good Lor'!"

The airship hovered about twenty or thirty feet above the cabin. Then Pomp went down on a rope ladder and explained matters to the beleaguered negroes.

But they refused to believe but that the people in the airship were messengers from Heaven to save them.

However, they were all got aboard the airship after awhile and then conveyed safely to the main land.

Here they were taken leave of with enthusiastic praise from the aged negro and the wench. The last seen of them the old fellow was earnestly praying in thanksgiving.

The airship kept on for two days, and then the Atlantic was sighted. The great journey around the horizon was nearing its end.

A stay was made on the Florida coast to repair some of the machinery. The airship caused quite a sensation among the Southerners.

Then once more the aerial voyagers were afloat.

The flight northward to New York was interesting and quickly made.

Frank did not deem it best to stop in the great metropolis, but changed his course to the westward for Readestown.

But the airship was sighted, and the thrilling report of its return was circulated through the country.

So that a great crowd was gathered at Readestown to welcome the voyagers home.

Newspaper men were there in force, and exciting accounts of the great trip around the horizon were printed in the great dailies.

"Will you attempt another aerial trip soon, Mr. Reade?" asked one of the reporters of the young inventor.

"No," replied Frank; "I think not. The Arrow I shall take apart and stow away for future use. I intend to begin work at once upon an invention of an entirely differ-

ent nature, of which I hope to give you a good account some later day."

This brings us, therefore, to the end of our tale. Our three daring voyagers safe home in Readestown can find no better time in which to take leave of us with the reader's kind permission.

THE END.

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